

A lush garden scene featuring a raised garden bed on the left with various green plants. In the center and right, there are vibrant flowers, including clusters of pink and purple blossoms and some orange flowers. A dark green trellis structure is visible on the left side of the frame. The background is filled with dense green foliage.

# The **White House Kitchen Garden**





*First Lady Michelle Obama harvests vegetables with students in the White House Kitchen Garden on the South Lawn, May 28, 2013.*

*(Official White House Photo by Chuck Kennedy)*

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First Lady Michelle Obama harvests vegetables with students in the White House Kitchen Garden on the South Lawn, May 28, 2013.

(Official White House Photo by Chuck Kennedy)

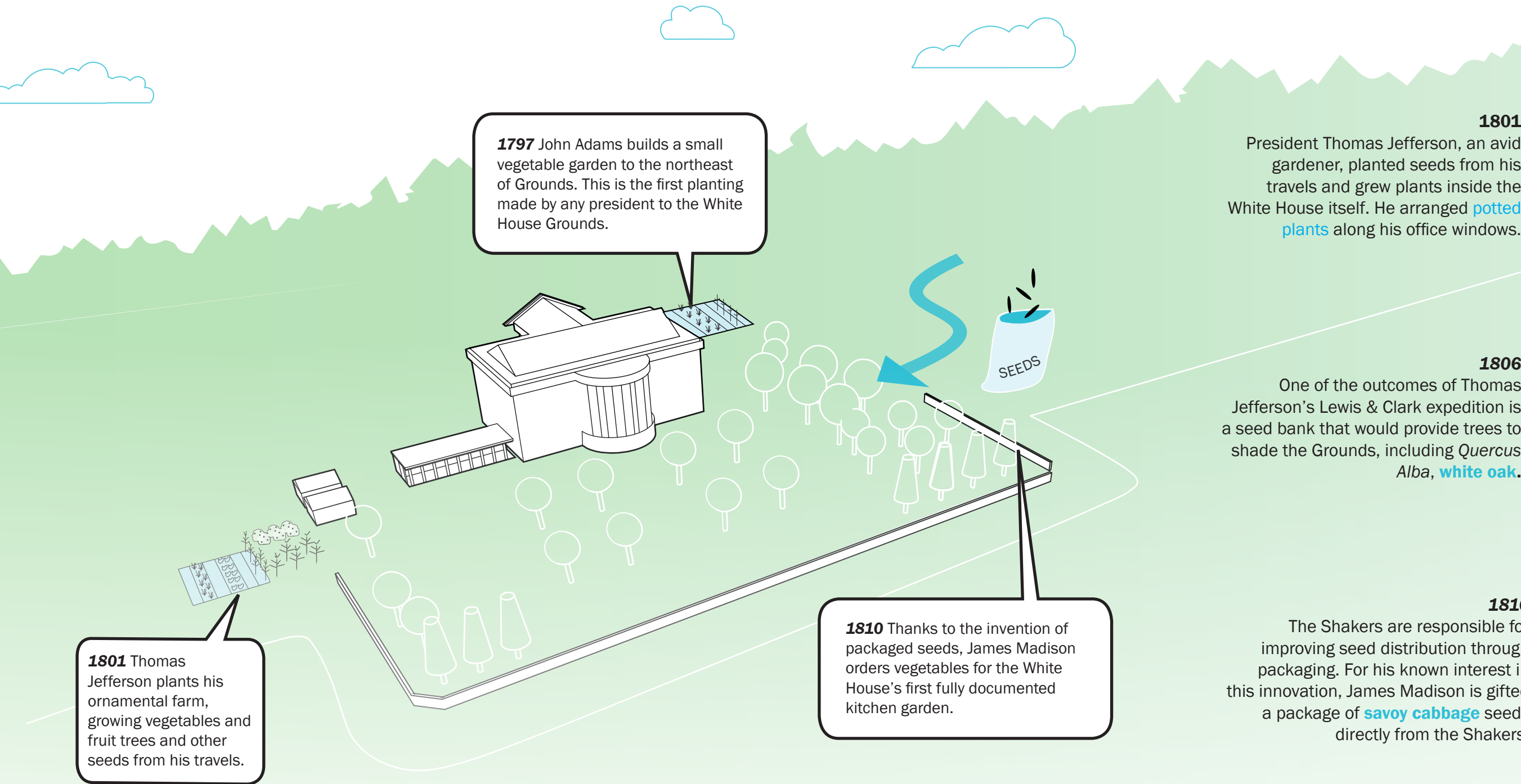
## Key Historical Events

# Growing Food on the White House Grounds

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The White House Kitchen Garden shares a lineage with other gardens within President's Park. It extends this history into new directions, connecting food cultivation with childhood health and community well-being.





1797-1817

## Gardens of the Founders

### Ornamental Vegetable Gardens and Agrarian Democracy



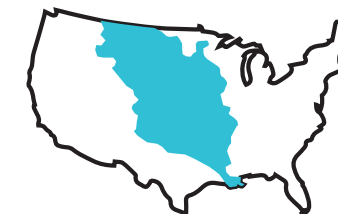
**1790s**

The myth of the self-sufficient “Yeoman farmer” permeates debates about the identity of the new nation.



**... at the same time**

Presidents collect seeds from travel and global exploration.



**1803**

Louisiana Purchase opens huge lands for farming and grazing.



**1803**

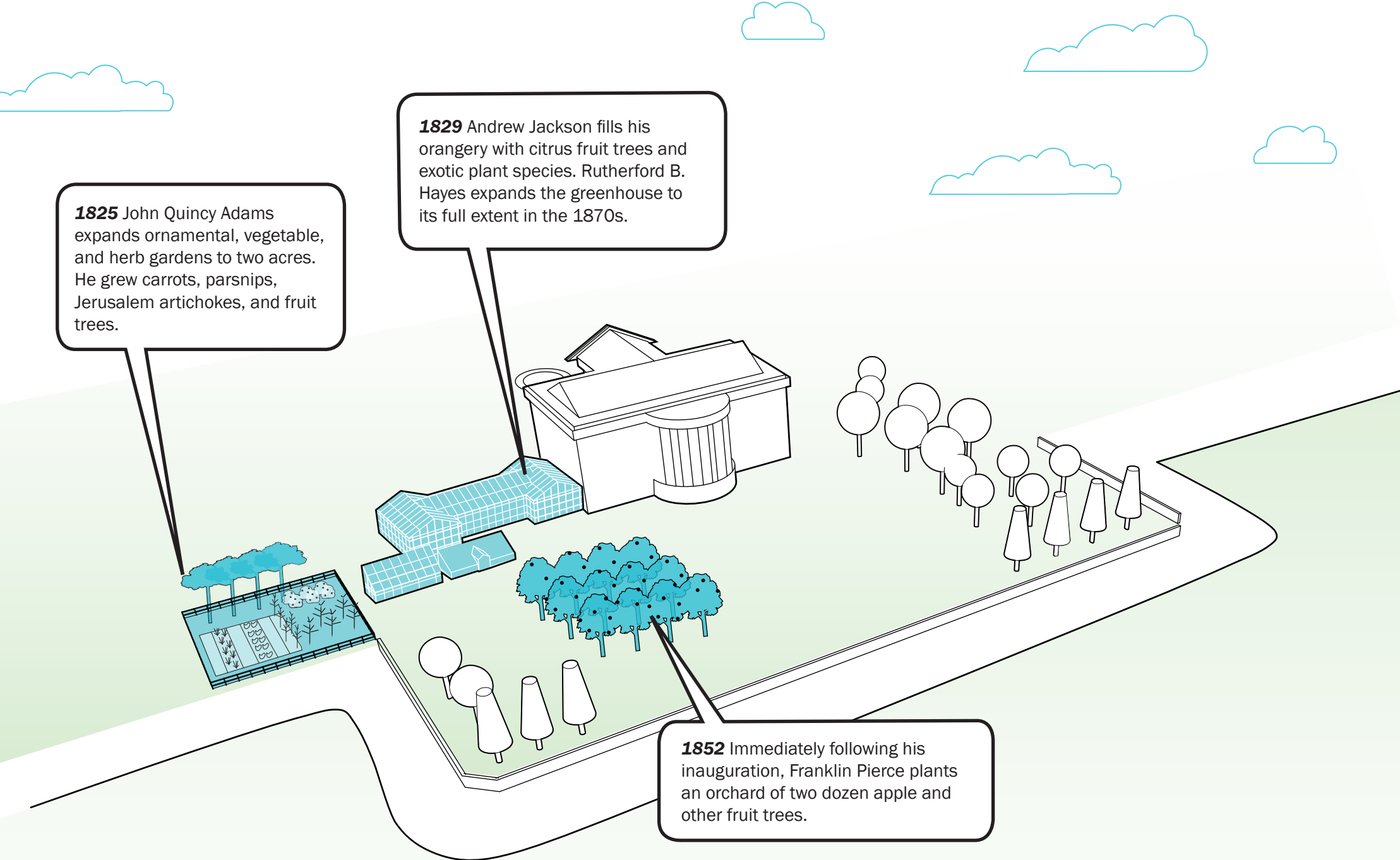
Thomas Moore patents the ice box refrigerator in Maryland. It is first used for butter.



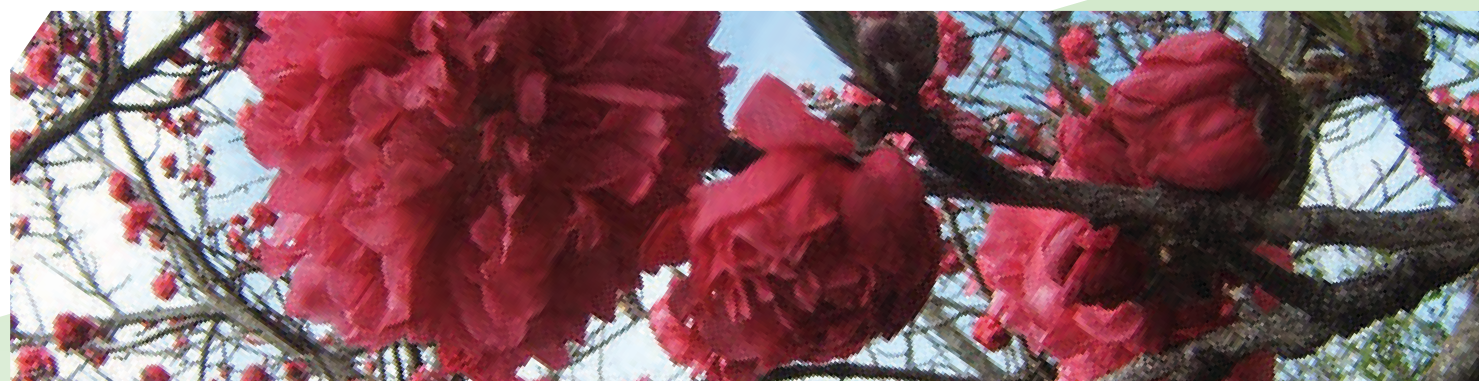
**1815-1820**

New England farmers shift from growing wheat to dairy farming and tobacco production because of competition from western farms.





**1825** John Quincy Adams catalogs his fruit trees and vegetables with illustrations and detailed notes. He is particularly fond of his fruit trees.



**1829** Andrew Jackson creates an orangery, an early type of greenhouse where tropical plants could be grown. This begins the tradition of growing **citrus trees** and other exotic plants at the White House.



**1857** **Pitcher plants** are one species of the First Lady Harriet Lane's global roundup of plants in the White House conservatory. These come from the Malay Archipelago. Other plants are camellias from Asia and poinsettias from Mexico.



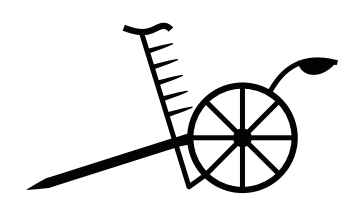
1818-1881

# Gardens of Discovery & Experimentation

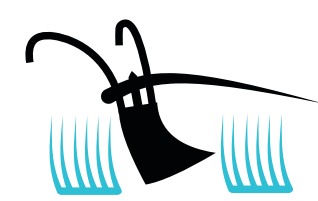
## Fruit Orchards, Exotic Plants, Greenhouse Technology



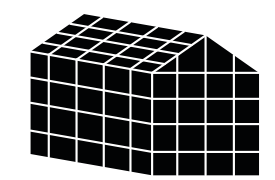
**1819-1825**  
The canning industry is established in an effort to extend the shelf life of commonly eaten foods.



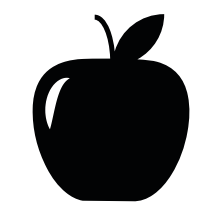
**1831**  
Cyrus McCormick invents the horse-drawn mechanical reaper, increasing harvest yields and saving hours of labor.



**1837**  
John Deere invents the steel plow, which facilitates breaking the midwestern prairie sod and large-scale agricultural production.

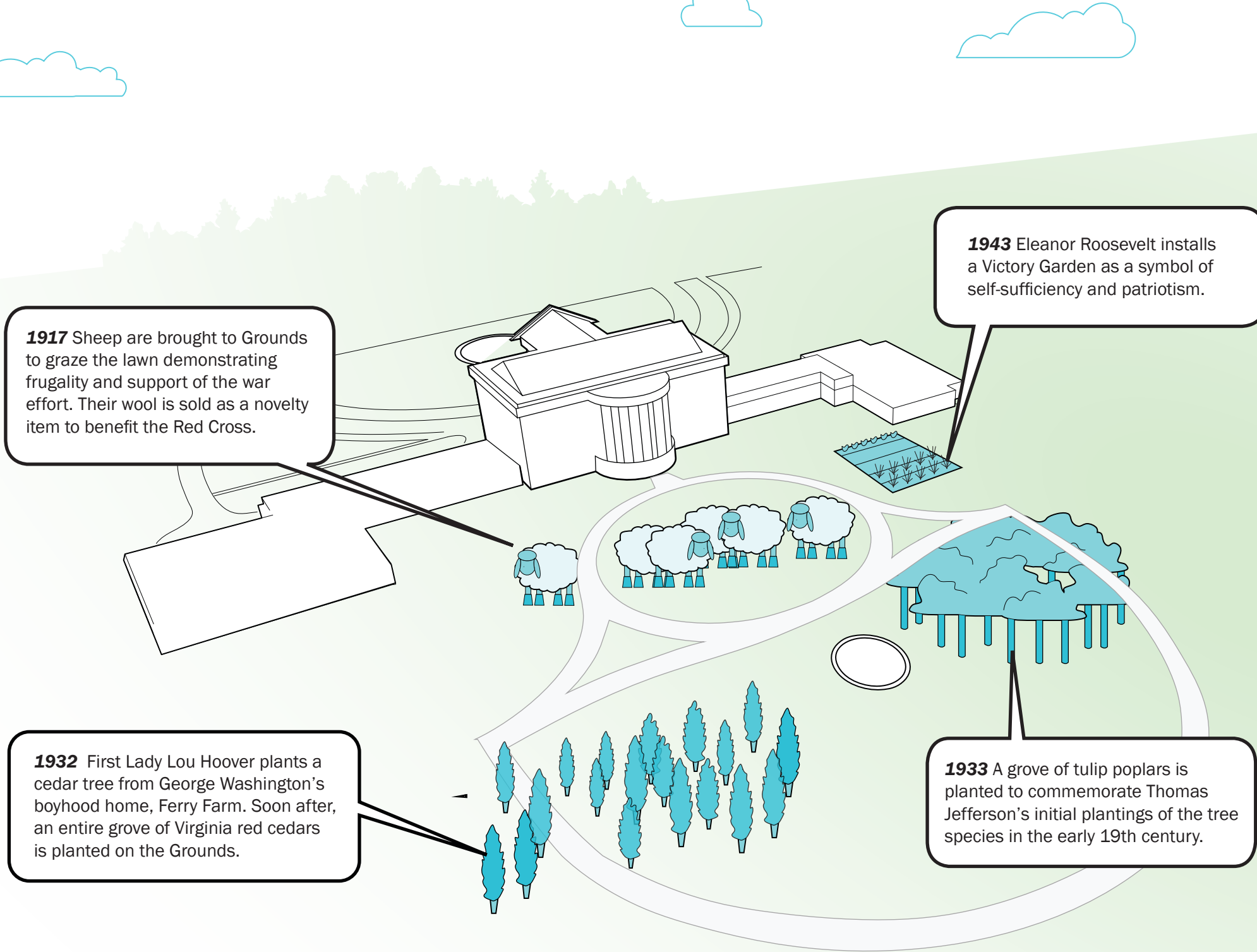


**1851**  
Innovations in glass production catalyze greenhouse technology and expand possibility for rare plant cultivation.



**1890s**  
The school lunches are initiated to address malnutrition in children and provide balanced mid-day meals.





**1932**  
For the 200th anniversary of George Washington's birth, President Hoover transplants a **Virginia red cedar tree** from Ferry Farm to the White House grounds.



**1933**  
Franklin D. Roosevelt establishes a commemorative grove of **tulip poplar trees** in honor of Thomas Jefferson. Now a symbol of patriotism, the tulip poplar is among the first tree species planted on the grounds.



**1940s**  
Cookbooks for Victory Gardens facilitates new diets with recipes using homegrown ingredients. A popular recipe is Victory Garden Carrot Cake, using **heirloom carrots**, a common staple in the garden.



1913-1945

# Gardens of Self-Sufficiency & Patriotism

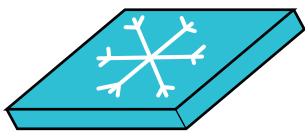
## War Gardens & Victory Gardens



**WWI + WWII**  
Presidents Wilson and Roosevelt urge food-growing through victory gardens to assist war efforts and increase food supply.



**1933**  
The Agricultural Adjustment Act provides relief for Dust Bowl and Depression, the beginning of federal commodity support.



**1941-45**  
Through the advent of refrigerated railway cars and cellophane, frozen foods are popularized.



**1940s**  
The first modern synthetic insecticides develop as an outgrowth of military technology to combat disease in trenches.



**1946**  
President Truman signs the National School Lunch Act to safeguard health of the nation's children.



**2014** The pollinator garden is planted at the north edge of the garden as part of a greater initiative to improve the habitat for pollinators.

**2009** The first beehive is installed on the South Lawn near the Kitchen Garden.

**2009** First Lady Michelle Obama plants the White House Kitchen Garden with first ever compost system.

**2009**

The Jefferson beds of the White House Kitchen Garden honor the late president's favorite fruits and vegetables from Monticello. These include Tennis-ball and Brown Dutch lettuces, Marseilles figs, and **Green Globe artichoke**.

**2014**

First Lady Michelle Obama plants a **pollinator garden** in the Kitchen Garden to support the critical role of pollinators in food production. Pollinators, such as bees and monarch butterflies, face decline, and the Obama Administration puts out a call to action to protect their health and habitat.

**2016**

NASA shares with the Kitchen Garden, **Red Romaine "Outredgeous" lettuce**, seeds of the same variety grown on the International Space Station (ISS), highlighting how food can be grown in less conventional places, including space. A low-power, simple, on-orbit gardening system called "Veggie" enables space plant biology and food production.

2009-2016

# Gardens of Healthy Communities

## Urban Gardens and Kitchen Gardens



**2009**

First Lady Michelle Obama plants the White House Kitchen Garden with local students.



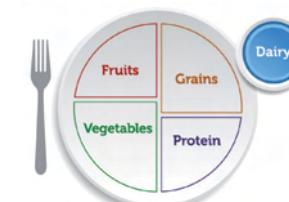
**February 2010**

The *Let's Move!* initiative is launched as a national initiative to help kids and families lead healthier lives.



**December 2010**

President Obama signs the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act to set higher nutrition standards for food in schools.



**June 2011**

The First Lady launches the USDA's new food icon, MyPlate, which prompts Americans to build healthy meals and snacks based on the five food groups.



**October 2016**

First Lady Michelle Obama dedicates White House Kitchen Garden.





*First Lady Michelle Obama joins school children and chefs for the annual fall harvest of the White House Kitchen Garden, Oct. 14, 2014.*

*(Official White House Photo by Lawrence Jackson)*

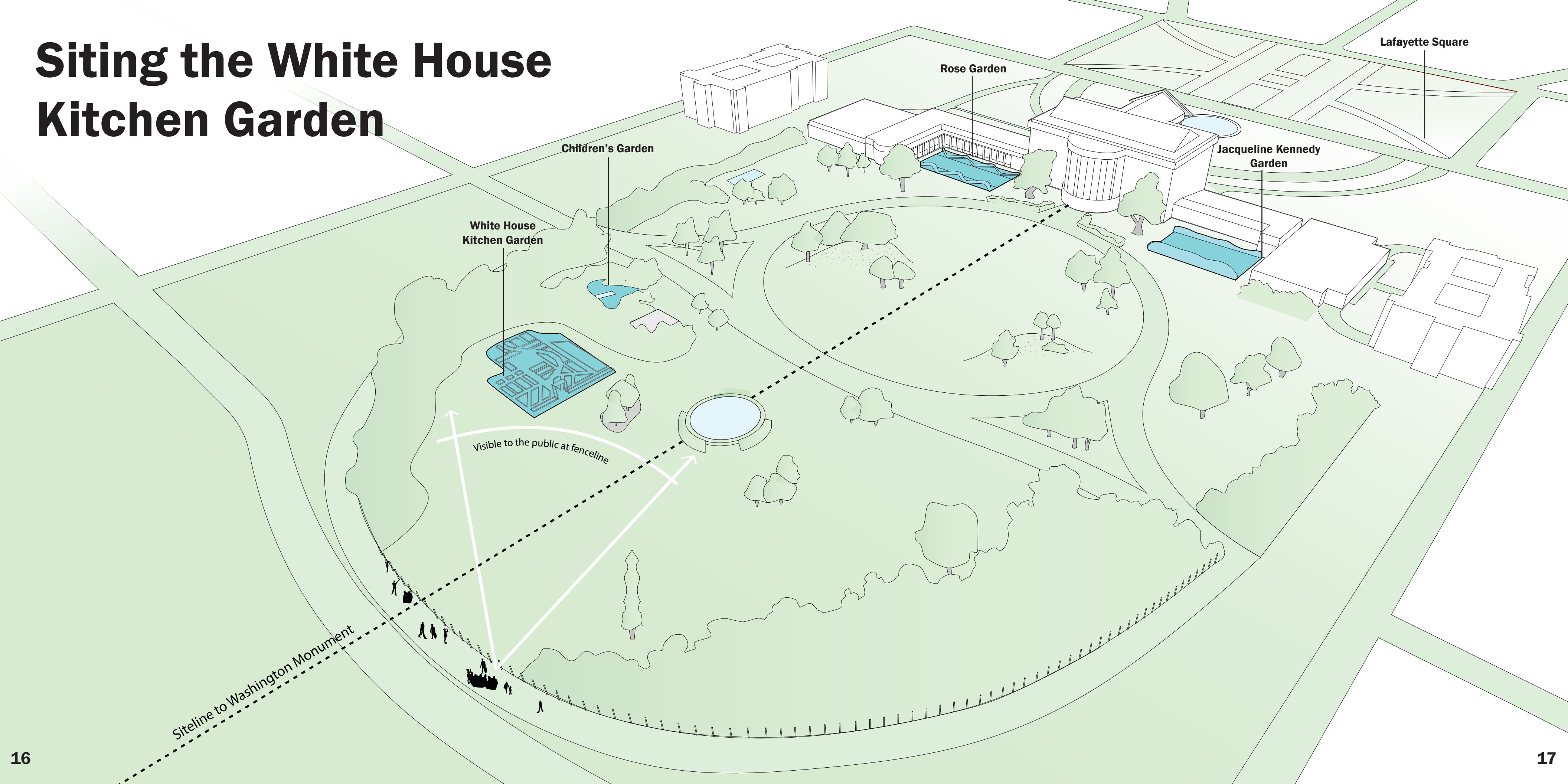
## The Evolution of **The White House Kitchen Garden**

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Since its inception in 2009, the White House Kitchen Garden has evolved into a national symbol connecting children's health with cultivating and harvesting healthy food and increasing physical activity. Over time, the garden has been modified as lessons were learned and new elements were added.



# Siting the White House Kitchen Garden





# Breaking Ground

**Planting Seeds**

On March 20, 2009, the First Lady invited students from Bancroft Elementary School, a public school in Washington, D.C., to help break ground and prepare the area for the L-shaped White House Kitchen Garden to be planted near the South Lawn.

**Starting a National Conversation**

The First Lady planted the White House Kitchen Garden to initiate a national conversation around the health and well-being of our nation. In time, that conversation led to *Let's Move!*, an initiative Mrs. Obama launched in 2010, dedicated to helping kids and families lead healthier lives.

“For me, planting a garden was a way to help start a national conversation about the health of our children, an issue I care deeply about, not just as First Lady but as a mother.”

- Michelle Obama, *American Grown*



# Humble Beginnings

**Perennial Border**  
The 2009 garden plan incorporated the planting of flowers along the edges of the vegetable plots to help with soil erosion.

**Fencing**  
One of the lessons learned in the initial season of the garden was how to prevent the infestation of pests. Fencing posts were inserted to keep out four-legged creatures like rabbits.

**The Bounty**  
Fruits, vegetables and herbs grown in the garden are harvested and sent to the White House kitchen to be included in meals at White House events for the First Family and guests.

**A Garden that Gives**  
Produce that isn't used in the White House kitchen is donated to Miriam's Kitchen, a local organization that prepares fresh, healthy meals for those in need. The tradition continued throughout the Obama Administration.

**First Planting**  
On April 9, 2009, the First Lady was joined by students from Bancroft Elementary School, a school located in Washington, D.C., to plant the Kitchen Garden for the first time.

“When you plant a garden for the very first time, you wind up learning by trial and error, and we certainly had our fair share of the latter in the White House Kitchen Garden.”

- Michelle Obama, *American Grown*



# Raising It Up

## Raising the Beds

After learning from the first year of the garden the mounded soil beds were not successful because of their size and inability to prevent soil erosion, it was decided to edge the beds with wood to keep the soil in place and allow it to retain nutrients.

## Three Sisters Planting

On June 3, 2011, American Indian and Alaska Native youth planted the Three Sisters Planting: Cherokee White Eagle corn, Rattlesnake pole beans, and Seminole squash seeds. The seeds were donated by the National Museum of the American Indian.

## Pollinator Garden

In the spring of 2014, the pollinator garden was planted next to the Kitchen Garden to support bees, butterflies, birds, and bats as part of the Obama Administration's efforts to promote pollinator health and habitat.

## Thomas Jefferson Beds

Two beds in the garden were dedicated to America's third president, Thomas Jefferson, who was an avid gardener. The plants grown in those beds come from seeds from Jefferson's gardens at Monticello.

## Garden Expansion

Over the years, the garden grew in size from 1,100 square feet to 2,800 square feet.

“By 2011, everything about our garden had grown. We opened up more space and installed raised beds to protect the soil and make it easier to care for our crops.”

- Michelle Obama, *American Grown*



# A Lasting Symbol

## Gathering Place

The gathering place is the heart of the garden, where people come together. At the center, garden visitors are invited to grow, gather, and learn around a communal table.

## Communal Table

The communal table is the centerpiece for the gathering space. Made of wood from different tree species, the table reflects the diversity of landscape and regions in our country and guests that use it.

## Entrance Arbor

Walking down from the White House, visitors are welcomed by a new entry to the Kitchen Garden.

## Welcoming Threshold

Together, the east beds and pollinator garden create a clear threshold into the Kitchen Garden. With these bed expansions and other changes to the layout, the garden grew to approximately 2,800 square feet.

## New Walkway

A new stone path offers an accessible and welcoming entrance into the gathering space and the communal table.

## Inscribed in Stone

On October 5, 2016, First Lady Michelle Obama dedicated the White House Kitchen Garden and unveiled all of these changes, including a bluestone slab that welcomes guests with the inscription: "WHITE HOUSE KITCHEN GARDEN- established in 2009 by First Lady Michelle Obama with the hope of growing a healthier nation for our children."

“People from all walks of life and every sector of our society are coming together and using gardens - and the food they grow and lessons they teach - to build a healthier future for our children.”

“Gardens ...bring people together - family, friends, neighbors, even strangers united by their desire for a successful harvest. And they give us a chance to work with, and learn from, each other, reminding us of all we have in common and helping us grow stronger, more connected communities.”

- Michelle Obama, *American Grown*

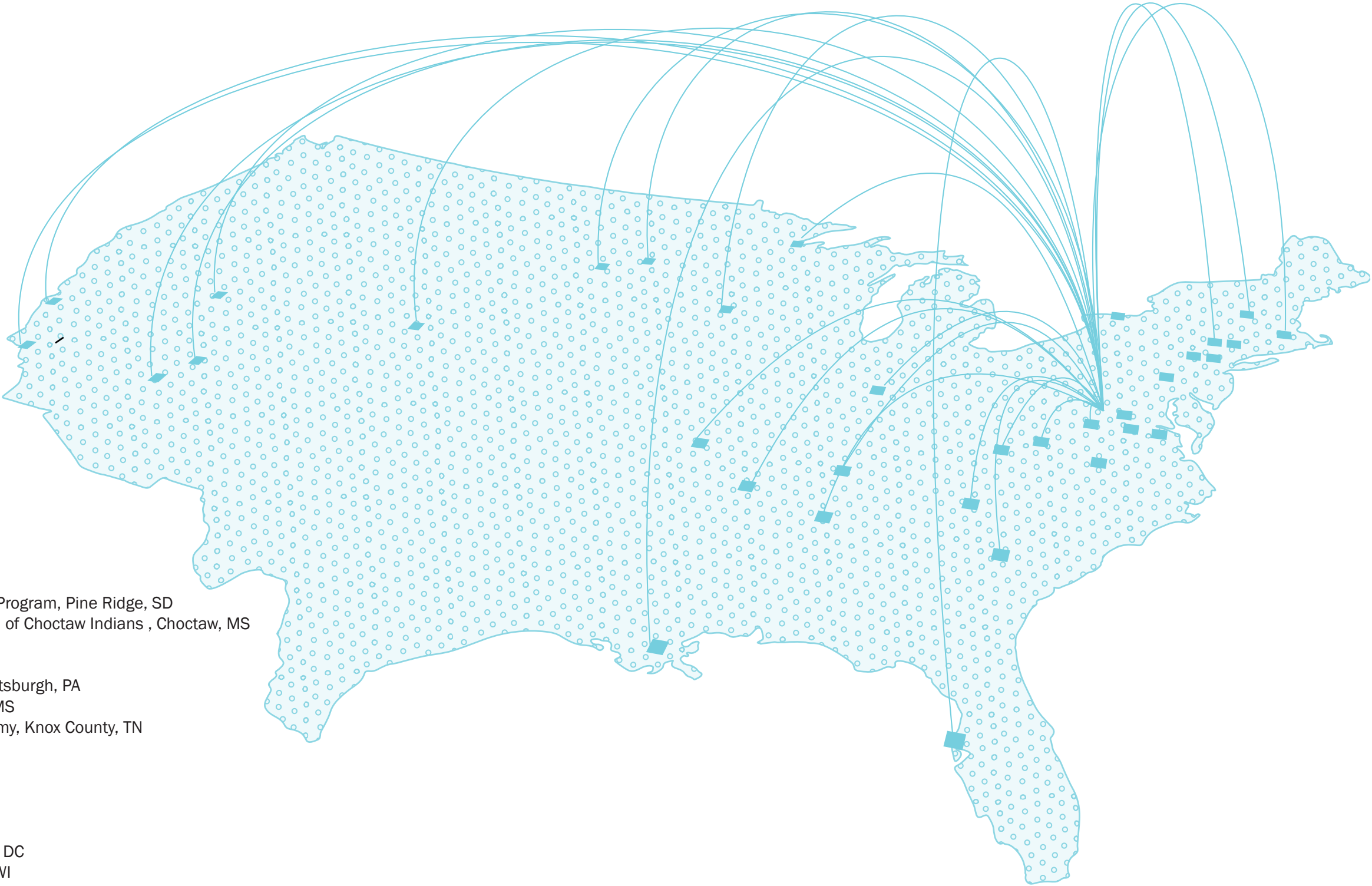


# Growing Together

Throughout the Obama Administration, First Lady Michelle Obama invited students to join her in planting and harvesting the White House Kitchen Garden, both from the local community and across the country. Students from the following schools and locations helped out in the garden:

Alice Deal Middle School, Washington, DC  
Annapolis Recreation and Parks, Annapolis, MD  
Arthur D. Healthy School, Somerville, MA  
Bancroft Elementary School, Washington, DC  
Benjamin David Gullett Elementary School, Bradenton, FL  
Bright Horizons, Silver Spring, MD  
Capital City Public Charter School, Washington, DC  
Carlin Springs Elementary School, Arlington, VA  
Carrollton Middle School, Carrollton, GA  
CentroNia Daycare Center, Washington, DC  
Channel Islands National Park, California  
Charles Powell Community Center, Memphis, TN  
Chitimacha Tribal School, Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana, Charenton, LA  
Cleveland Elementary School, Washington, DC  
DC Bilingual Public Charter School, Washington, DC  
Edible Schoolyard New Orleans, New Orleans, LA  
Foothill Elementary School, Boulder, CO  
Frederick Douglass National Historic Site, Washington, DC  
Freeman Elementary School, Flint, MI  
Friendship Public Charter Elementary School, Washington, DC  
Girl Scouts of Western New York, Troop 60325, Fairport, NY  
Greenbelt Recreation Department, Greenbelt, MD  
Greenview Upper Elementary School, Lyndhurst, OH  
Harriet Tubman Elementary School, Washington, DC  
Hollin Meadows Elementary School, Alexandria, VA  
Holly Springs Primary School, Holly Springs, MS  
Kimball Elementary School , Washington, DC  
Langley Park McCormick, Hyattsville, MD  
Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden, Henrico, VA

Linwood Holton Elementary, Richmond, VA  
Long Beach Elementary School, Surf City, NJ  
Magnolia Elementary School, Joppa, MD  
Milford Central Academy, Milford, DE  
Milton Elementary School, Milton, VT  
Mitchell Elementary School, Ames, IA  
Montezuma School to Farm Project, Cortez, CO  
New Kituwah Academy, Cherokee, NC  
New York Botanical Garden , Bronx, NY  
North Elementary School, Morgantown, WV  
Oglala Sioux Tribe Child Care and Development Program, Pine Ridge, SD  
Pearl River Elementary School, Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians , Choctaw, MS  
Perrymont Elementary School, Lynchburg, VA  
Petrified Forest National Park, Arizona  
Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens, Pittsburgh, PA  
Pleasant Hill Elementary School, Olive Branch, MS  
Sarah Moore Greene Magnet Technology Academy, Knox County, TN  
Seaton Elementary School, Washington, DC  
STAR School, Flagstaff, AZ  
Stetser Elementary School, Chester, PA  
Sumner Elementary School, Greensboro, NC  
Union Beach Memorial School, Union Beach, NJ  
US Kids Child Development Center, Washington, DC  
Washburn School Garden Program, Washburn, WI  
Washington Elementary School, Pierre, SD  
Waverly-Shell Rock Middle School , Waverly, IA  
Willow Cove Elementary School , Pittsburg, CA  
YMCA of Metropolitan Washington , Washington, DC



The White House Kitchen Garden started with seeds from Thomas Jefferson’s home at **Monticello** in Virginia and vegetables from **New Morning Farm** in Pennsylvania. Since then, the garden has inspired others across the nation in a network of growing, gathering, and learning.





First Lady Michelle Obama talks with students about composting during their garden demonstrations at Philip's Academy Charter School in Newark, N.J., April 7, 2016.

(Official White House Photo by Amanda Lucidon)



**Get Growing!**

# Plant Your Own Kitchen Garden

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Kitchen gardens are more than just plants. They are neighborhood parks, social centers, gathering places, places of exchange, and outdoor hands-on classrooms. Kitchen gardens can happen anywhere - in a school yard, down the street, or in a neighborhood park - and are a source of growing, gathering, and learning together. To plant your own kitchen garden, check out the *Let's Move! Gardening Guide*: [www.letsmove.gov/kitchen-garden-checklist](http://www.letsmove.gov/kitchen-garden-checklist)





**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

This document is a result of a larger project through a cooperative agreement between the National Park Service and University of Virginia’s School of Architecture. The project focused on small design improvements to the White House Kitchen Garden under the direction of First Lady Michelle Obama. We celebrate First Lady Michelle Obama whose boldness and tenacity to build a kitchen garden on the White House grounds extends a tradition of past presidents and first ladies. As part of her Let’s Move! Initiative to raise a move healthy generation of children, the Kitchen Garden inspires future generations too grow, gather, and learn.

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- Anna Cai | BS Architecture 2016
- Tanya Denckla Cobb | Director of the Institute for Environmental Negotiation
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- Stephen Grotz | BS Architecture 2016
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- Elizabeth K. Meyer | Dean and Professor, Department of Landscape Architecture
- Scott Shinton | Master of Landscape Architecture 2016
- Nancy Takahashi | Distinguished Lecturer, Department of Landscape Architecture
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